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Afghan Refugees

(U) The number of refugees in Pakistan has now passed 700,000 and appears to be rapidly approaching 1 million. A total of 1.5 million (or even more) is possible by the end of the year, but is dependent on the direction of the insurgency and the effectiveness of Soviet efforts to cut the flow of refugees.

(LOU) The refugees have so far been hospitably received in Pakistan, but a number of factors may work to mitigate their welcome. The most immediate problem will be the health conditions in the refugee camps. International relief workers have observed that, although the problem is currently under control, health conditions may deteriorate substantially during the coming months.

(U) Most of the refugees eventually register with government agencies in order to qualify for relief supplies. About 650,000 are already registered in 53 camps, ranging in size from 500 to 11,000 and located from Chitral in the

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north to Dalbandin in the south and west (see map, below). Others, whom the Government of Pakistan does not consider to be true refugees, such as the "kuchis," or nomads, are prevented from registering.



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Rapprochement With the USSR

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(C) Pakistan's Relations With India

Pakistan and India have entered a period of closer consultation on major issues despite continued differences over the political issues that divide them--Afghanistan, Kashmir, and arms aid to Pakistan. Prime Minister Gandhi's special envoy, Sardar Swaran Singh, recently concluded a visit to Islamabad, and Gandhi and Zia met briefly at the Zimbabwe independence ceremonies in Salisbury. The talks, while conducted in a cordial atmosphere, accomplished little. Although further discussions will take place, tangible progress in resolving these differences is not likely for the foreseeable future.

Most importantly, both sides apparently concluded the talks with their perceptions of the Afghan crisis unchanged. The Indians continued to favor an as yet undefined regional solution to the problem, while the Pakistanis remained firm in their allegiance to the Islamic Conference resolutions on the subject. There have been unconfirmed reports (denied by the Indians) that Singh proposed tripartite talks involving Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India, but that the Pakistanis turned them down.

Nevertheless, both sides appear to have found these talks useful and have indicated that they would like the process of consultations to continue. The next step will probably be a visit to New Delhi by Agha Shahi.

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